

A N.

J. Thomas

197

A D D R E S S

TO THE *Friends of Truth*.

SERIOUS and CANDID PROFESSORS of CHRISTIANITY,

On the following Subjects, viz.

- I. The Use of Reason in Matters of Religion,
- II. The Power of Man to do the Will of God,
- III. Original Sin,
- IV. Election and Reprobation,
- V. The Divinity of Christ, and
- VI. Atonement for Sin by the Death of Christ.

Occasioned by an APPEAL, lately published, on the same Subjects.

If the *foundations* be destroyed, what can the righteous do?
Psal. xi. 3.

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God, *1 John iv. 1.*

To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. *Is. viii. 20.*

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PROFESSORS & CHRISTIANS

SERIOUS AND CANDID

BY A. T. H.

INTRODUCTION

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE candid reception given to the former editions of this little tract, and the extensive spread of it through *England* and *Ireland*, are circumstances which lead the Author to hope he hath not written in vain.

The late republication of the Appeal, has occasioned the reprinting of this Address in answer to it. And the Author hopes that the readers of the one, will be so impartial as to peruse with attention and candor what is contained in the other.

He has written, he can truly say, with no spirit of party, or the least ill-will to the Author of the Appeal, whose literary and moral character he has long admired and revered. But what is contended for in this Address, which he wishes may be permitted to accompany the Appeal, appears to him to be not only truth, but truth of the highest importance, the truth of God, and eminently calculated to promote genuine practical religion. He has written therefore from the fullness of his heart, and is indeed in earnest; feeling, as strongly as ever the Author of the Appeal can, the sincerest goodwill and compassion to the multitude, who are too

ready to be tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine ; and most ardently wishing to be the instrument of establishing them in the great truths of the gospel, and in that evangelical humility and holiness without which, whatever our principles are, we shall never see the Lord.

In this age of scepticism and levity, the Author is very sensible he has nothing to expect from many, but to be accounted a knave or a fool for what he has written. A knave, who only writes to secure the reputation and emoluments of orthodoxy,* or a fool, whose heart is, perhaps, something better than his head.† But none of these things move him, nor is it in the least on this account he conceals his name, but merely, with the Author of the Appeal, to give what he has written a better chance of being read without prejudice. And should those good purposes be in any degree answered by it, for which it is most sincerely intended, it will greatly overbalance every other consideration, and yield greater pleasure to the Author, than the highest applause could have afforded him, had he published a work of the most pompous and popular nature.

Feb. 25, 1783.

* See the Triumph of Truth, by the Author of the Appeal, page 23.

† Appeal, page 21.

A N**A D D R E S S**

To the SERIOUS and CANDID

PROFESSORS of CHRISTIANITY.

My Dear Fellow Christians!

WHEN I reflect upon the repeated attempts which have been made, particularly of late, to unsettle your minds respecting the principles of religion, and to excite you to reject with abhorrence that faith for which your pious ancestors earnestly contended, I am filled with the most painful anxieties concerning you. I am afraid lest, in this superficial age, these unwearyed efforts should prove but too successful. Could I, indeed, look upon the principles of religion in that merely speculative light in which they have too often been represented, I should not be at all concerned about them. But the *principles* of religion, it is certain, enter deeply into the *practice* of it, its *doctrines* are closely united with its correspondent *duties*, nor can the divine life-

be expected to flourish, when those truths which are the great support of it are disdainfully rejected. Permit me therefore, dear brethren, in the spirit of fervent love, seriously to address you on so interesting an occasion. Permit me freely and affectionately to exhort you, to hold fast the *form of sound words* which you have long since heard of Christ and his apostles, and to contend earnestly for that *faith* which is clearly and once for all delivered to you in the sacred records. *Buy the truth, but sell it not.* Let no man take your crown.

The manifest design of the Appeal which hath been circulated amongst you with such uncommon assiduity, is to overturn the very *foundations* of your faith and hope. It is not levelled merely against some of the less important and more *disputable* points of Christianity, but at those *capital essential* truths, which have hitherto been esteemed the *distinguishing peculiarities* of the gospel. The intention of it, is to persuade you, that you are *not*, in consequence of the original apostacy, become guilty and, in yourselves, *helpless sinners*. That Jesus Christ is *not* the person you have hitherto supposed him to be, but a *mere man* like yourselves. That you are *not* to be saved by *his merits*, but merely by your own *repentance and reformation*. Your *repentance*, I suppose, if you should happen to commit any sin, and *reformation*, if you should chance to do wrong. That as to Christ he did *no more than was his duty to do*, and that the doctrine of atonement for sin by his death is a *popish invention*. And then, after all, because the happiness of hea-

ven

ven is modestly supposed to be rather more than our good works absolutely deserve, we are persuaded to believe, that this doctrine of salvation by our own ~~repentance and reformation~~, is the gospel doctrine of salvation by *free grace*.

If the foundations be thus destroyed, what shall the righteous do? The patron of these unscriptural tenets appears indeed to be a very sincere and honest man, and God forbid! we should think or represent him otherwise. Judge not that ye be not judged. But what then? Did not *Paul* himself before his conversion, verily think that he ought to do many things *contrary* to the name of Jesus of Nazareth? And though an *angel from heaven* were to publish *any other gospel* than that which we have in the new testament, are we not commanded to reject it? Believe not then, dearly beloved, every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God. Try them by the *law* and by the *testimony*. If they speak not *according* to this word, this *unerring word*, this only *infallible standard of truth*, it is because, though what they speak be ever so specious and plausible, there is *no light* in them.

By this rule I wish you to judge of the contents of the Appeal, which treats

I. Of the use of reason in matters of religion.

It has always been customary with those who have wanted to set aside some of the most *obvious truths of revelation*, as they are generally esteemed, mightily to cry up human *reason*. But the *false* use

use of reason, no protestant hath, that I know of, ever opposed, if we except a few palpable enthusiasts. And to wish for any other use of reason, is certainly in itself, very unreasonable. It is readily allowed that we are to use our reason, in judging both of the evidence of the scriptures themselves, and the true intent and meaning of what they contain. But if we think ourselves at liberty to reject any truth that is apparently taught in the scriptures, because it appears to us irrational and absurd, this is not a sober and right use of reason, but a very great abuse of it. And from this abuse of reason it is more than probable, most of the corruptions of Christianity have arisen. When our modern divines talk of improvements in religion as well as philosophy, they seem to forget that the sacred code has been compleat for more than seventeen hundred years, and that it is at our peril we presume to alter it. They seem to forget that noble maxim of the great Chillingworth, which yet upon other occasions they can readily enough remember, that "The bible, the bible only is the religion of protestants." I do not wish, my brethren, to have you yield an implicit faith to any fallible men, nor to be deterred from embracing truth by the authority of names ever so great and respectable. I am sensible that though Plato may be a friend, and Socrates a friend, Truth is a greater friend than all. But surely a man of common modesty, will not hastily, nor without the fullest conviction, reject such principles as have had the sanction of the wisest and best.

of men, such principles as have had a *Howe*, a *Watts*, a *Doddridge*, and a cloud of other witnesses to support them. Our predecessors had the *same* *bible* we have, and, it may be presumed, as good capacities, as much integrity and piety, and as large a measure of the influences of the Spirit of God. And though they might nevertheless be mistaken, as perhaps we all are in some respect or other, yet there seems to be as little reason to suppose, that because we of this age understand *philosophy* better than our ancestors, we must therefore understand the *bible* better, as there is to suppose we must understand the *thirty-nine articles* of the Church of England better than those who drew them up, or who lived nearer than we do to the age in which they were compiled, because we are better *philosophers* than they were, and know a great deal more than they did of *electricity*, and other philosophical subjects. Indeed the doctrine of scripture is, that those things which are righteously hid from the *wise* and *prudent*, it pleaseth God mercifully to reveal unto *babes*. It is much to be lamented that men ever have been, and it is to be feared, ever will be proudly desirous of being *wise above* what is written. Instead of saying, when they look into the *bible*, " Speak Lord; thy servant heareth," they are ready rather to say with *Nicodemus*, " How can these things be?" Instead of saying, " What I know not, teach thou me!" they are ready haughtily to cry out, " Where mystery begins, religion ends." But are we not expressly assured that the *na-*

tural man* receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, and that neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned? And is it then at all to be wondered at, that many things should be found in the scriptures that are foolishness to such persons?

Let reason be under the absolute guidance of revelation, and we cannot err; but if we think to mould revelation according to the caprice of our unsanctified reason, we shall lose the benefit of both. To set up reason, in any respect, above revelation, is to prefer the glimmering of a taper to the light of the noon-day sun. And however we may be ready in the pride of our hearts to boast of reason, it becomes us to remember, that the world by wisdom knew not God, and that except we be converted, and become as little children, we shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.

—The next subject to be considered, is

II. The power of man to do the will of God.

There is no one subject, I believe, more frequently misunderstood, or more egregiously misrepresented than this. You are told, for instance, by the author of the *Appeal*, that the doctrine of man's inability to do the will of God, represents the Divine Being in such a light, that if we were to suppose

* That by the *natural* or *fleshy* man in this passage, we are to understand a man in his *natural* or *unrenewed* state, seems very evident from Rom. viii. 9. where the same apostle observes.— But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be the Spirit of God dwell in you.

pose he really acted agreeably to it, we should * want words to express our abhorrence of his cruelty. That it is as though a man's children were shut up in a building that was on fire, while he himself was without and had the key; and that instead of opening the door, to favor their escape, he only calls out to them to flee out of the place, in order to avoid instant destruction; and that, as the necessary consequence of this, they all perish in the flames before his eyes. A dismal story indeed! Well may the author of it cry out, *What would you think of such a father?* And for my own part I am very ready to answer for myself, that I should think him a cruel, vile, bad man.

But to convince you of the fallacy of such kind of representations as these, it were easy to say, *What would you think of a father, who, if he were to unlock the door of the house and call to his children to come out, yet, finding they were asleep or intoxicated, or by any other means so circumstanced as not to be perhaps either able or willing to come out, did not nevertheless do EVERY THING IN HIS POWER to bring them out, and save them from perishing in the flames?* Would you not think he wanted the bowels of a father? But, because the great God doth not see fit to use any other means than he does, doth not see fit, even in the dispensation of these means themselves, *to do ALL HE POSSIBLY COULD* to prevent the destruction of his children, (as this author chuses to term *sinners* in general,) shall we dare to charge the heavenly Father with want of compassion?

* Appeal, page 7th.

compassion? — The truth is, the *analogy* betwixt the *duty* of earthly parents to their children, and what is *fit and right* for the heavenly Parent to do towards his offspring, or rather, for the *moral and righteous Governor of the Universe* to do towards his *sinful creatures*; is so exceedingly inadequate and remote, that whenever we attempt to argue from the one to the other, we are in danger of running into perpetual mistakes and errors. The *ways of God* are, in ten thousand instances, in the *great deep*, and his *judgments past finding out*. We are indeed confident, that the great God always doth what is *right*. But yet, were we to measure what is *right* in *God*, by what would be *right in us*, in our contracted limited spheres of action, we should often be obliged to own that *God does wrong.**

But, in the case before us, who ever supposed that *God locked up the house?* Or that at the same time he called to his children to come out, he determined *not* to let them out, though they should discover ever so great a *desire* to come out, and *do every thing in their power to escape?* Is this “*the favorite opinion of many christian divines?*” I believe it is not the opinion of any *one.*

The misrepresentation principally arises from the author of the Appeal’s making no distinction betwixt

* The above paragraph was omitted in the *first edition* of the Address merely for the sake of brevity, as were several others. ‘Tis now inserted because, upon a review of it, the author thinks it of considerable importance, and has the very great satisfaction to find the sentiment it establishes confirmed by such able and truly respectable writers as Dr. *Oswald* and the *late President of New-Jersey College*. See Note under Article IV. and VI.

twixt a *natural* and a *moral* inability to do the will of God, a distinction of more consequence to the right understanding of the divine dispensations towards fallen man, than many seem to be aware of. Were the inability of man to do the will of God a *natural* inability, or the same kind of inability a man has to walk when he has a broken leg, or to attend to business when he is delirious in a fever, nothing can be conceived of more absurd or more cruel than it would be, to call upon him to do the will of God, and to threaten him with punishment if he did not. Nor doth it appear that, in this case, any *end* could be answered by such calls and threatenings, any more than as though they were addressed to a *stock* or a *stone*. But if the inability of man be only a *moral* inability, an inability of the *will*, a *criminal* and a *punishable* inability, then what can be more properly and suitably addressed to him, than the calls and invitations, the promises and threatenings of the word of God? These are means which every one knows are, in their own nature, adapted to remove a *moral indisposition* of the mind, just as much as the prescriptions of a physician or the operations of a surgeon are suited to remove any *natural disorder* of the body.* It is indeed often said that men *naturally* have no power, to do the will of God. And it is very true. But the meaning is not, that men have no *NATURAL power* to do the will of God, but that men *naturally*,

* This simile our blessed Lord himself seems to make use of, when he says,—*The whole need not a PHYSICIAN, but they that are sick.*” Matt. ix. 12.

or in their natural unconverted state, have no such power as is necessary in order to do the will of God, which is a power of the will. No divine, I believe, ever meant to say that man is *locked up in a house*, and *fast bound* there, so that he *cannot come out if he would*: but rather that he is so attached to the house (to keep to the simile in the Appeal) and so fond of his companions there, that there is no moral possibility of persuading him to come out, even though you tell him that immediate destruction hangs over him. Or, to drop the simile, that he is so alienated from the life of God, so *averse to* that which is spiritual and holy, so *infatuated by sin*, that he *will not come to Christ* that he might have life. That he is, in short, spiritually *dead*, dead to divine things, dead in trespasses and sins, and that no one but God himself can effectually persuade him to escape for his life. But there is all this while no *natural inability** in man to do the will of God: he has all the members of the body at his command, and the faculties of the soul. The grand defect is in the *will*. What he wants is

a heart

* Should any object to my reasoning here, I need only ask them—Does the sinner when he is converted to God, receive any new *NATURAL powers*? Is he made a *natural new creature*? Or is he not a *moral new creature*, having the same *natural powers* he had before his conversion, only *rectified* by divine grace; or, in other words, being *effectually persuaded and inclined*, to use his natural powers in a different manner, and for different purposes, from what he did before?

I am more and more convinced of the importance of the distinction betwixt a *natural* and *moral* inability to do the will of God; and that it is a distinction which has been too little regarded. Many zealous friends of truth, have inadvertently put arms into the hands of their enemies.—See upon this subject, Mr. Hall's excellent piece, lately published, entitled, *HELP TO ZION'S TRAVELLERS*.

How the Author of the Appeal, a zealous Necessarian, could overlook this obvious distinction, is surprising.

a heart or disposition to do the will of God. And it is therefore with the utmost propriety that sinners are exhorted to beg of God to create in them a clean heart, and to renew within them a right spirit. And till they have this, it is as impossible in a moral sense, that they should do the will of God, as though they labored under a *natural* incapacity of doing it. But yet reasonings, expostulations, promises, and threatenings, it is very evident, are highly proper in the one case, though they would be absurd and cruel, in the other. They are adapted to produce a moral power, but do not in the least contribute to a *natural* power of doing the will of God. And yet these reasonings and expostulations with men, are so far from supposing them possessed of any other than a *natural* power to do the will of God, which no one disputes, that they imply in the strongest manner the want of a moral power, since it is this alone which renders such means necessary. And these means therefore, as well as others of a more extraordinary nature, the great God, in his infinite wisdom and mercy, is pleased to make use of in the moral government of the world. And they, no doubt, answer the several great and important ends for which they were designed.——The degrees of guilt amongst the finally impenitent will be undoubtedly various, according to the moral and religious privileges they enjoyed, and their use or abuse of them ; and for some it will be more tolerable in the day of judgment than for others. Nor is it to be supposed that any man shall be finally condemned for *not* doing

what he was absolutely incapable of doing, be that what it will; but merely for not doing what, in the circumstances in which he was placed, he might and ought to have done! The next point to be considered, is

III. *Original sin.*

And however easy it may be to misrepresent and calumniate this humbling doctrine, it will be found, I am persuaded, extremely difficult, whilst any regard is paid to scripture or plain matter of fact, to overturn it.

That we suffer by the sin of Adam, even the author of the Appeal himself is obliged to allow. But why should we suffer by the sin of Adam, if we had no share, in any sense at all, in his sin? Can we suppose a righteous God to inflict sufferings upon any of his creatures without a cause? Or if the sin of Adam be the cause of any of the sufferings inflicted on his descendants, does not this imply in the strongest manner that his descendants are, upon some account or other, considered as partakers of his sin? Is it reasonable to suppose that a righteous God involves them in the penal effects of this sin, without their being at all concerned in the sin itself, which yet is the acknowledged cause of these effects?—Now all that is pleaded for by those that maintain the doctrine of original sin is, that as all mankind most evidently suffer by the sin of Adam, there must have been some original constitution settled by God, in consequence of which it is right and

and just that they should so suffer. But that it should be right for mankind to suffer judicially for the sin of Adam, as it is certain they do, without, at least, the imputation of that sin to them, they look upon as totally inconceivable. But then, by the imputation of Adam's sin, they do not mean that the great God supposes the posterity of Adam to have actually committed that sin, which we know is impossible; but that Adam, who was necessarily the natural head and root of his posterity, was also, for wise and good reasons, constituted their federal or covenant head, and that therefore the sin committed by him in that capacity, by which he broke the covenant made with him, became chargeable upon his posterity. And is not this the evident language of scripture? Do we not there read, that by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that, or more literally, IN WHOM, i. e. in Adam, all have sinned? That death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, i. e. had not actually sinned in their own persons? That by one man's offence death reigned by one—that by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation—that by one man's disobedience many were made sinners—and that death is the wages of sin? Now surely the meaning of these scriptures is very obvious, and the truth contained in them easy to be understood, however reluctant we may be to receive it.

The sufferings of children in consequence of the sins of their immediate parents, appear to be a re-

mote operation of the original constitution relative to the first parent and all that should descend from him! Nor is it in my opinion possible to account for this obvious fact, in any tolerable manner, upon any other supposition. It is indeed one of the greatest intricacies in the subject of providence, that not only the happiness but the *moral conduct* of most rational beings, should depend so much as it evidently does, in ten thousand instances, upon the good or bad behaviour of others. It is a difficulty which, I believe, in the present dark state, we shall never be able perfectly to solve. It is not however a difficulty peculiar to any sect of Christians, but which equally belongs to *all* who acknowledge the being and providence of God. And in the general, we have the utmost reason to be satisfied that it is right it should be in this respect as it is, or that it certainly would be otherwise; and that this method of proceeding is so over-ruled by the great governor of the world, that no one is really injured by it, or rendered more unhappy than he might or would have been under a different constitution. And even with respect to the *Adamic covenant*, which is so often painted in the most horrid colours, is it not reasonable to suppose, when we consider the perfection of the first man's nature and the advantageous circumstances in which he was placed, that if we had been all present upon the occasion, we should have thankfully accepted it and gladly ratified it? — It will be however to little purpose to complain of this covenant now, because we have ourselves all of us, personally sinned,

sinned, even after the exact similitude of Adam's transgression. As he did that which he had power to withstand, and yet falling justified his offence, rather than confessed it; so have we all in many things, times without number.

But perhaps it will be said that though mankind suffer in consequence of Adam's sin, yet the sufferings of this kind which they endure are not of a penal nature, but *salutary medicines* calculated to promote their spiritual health and happiness. To this it is natural to reply, even *medicines* suppose *sickness* and disorder, for the whole need not a physician but they that are sick. But not to insist on this, what can be conceived of more absurd than to suppose *blessings* of any kind communicated to us in consequence of sin? And if the calamities brought upon mankind by the sin of Adam be indeed of a *salutary* nature, how can we be said to suffer by the sin of Adam? Suffer! No, we are *benefited*. And if so, it would not only be hypocrisy, as the author of the Appeal intimates, to pretend to be *sorry* for this sin, but it would be gross impiety and ingratitude not to be thankful.*

But

* In a little tract, entitled—*A familiar illustration of certain passages of scripture, &c.* published by the author of the Appeal, I meet with the following passage upon this subject.

"That mankind are *considerable sufferers* in consequence of the fall of Adam is not denied; but all the evils which Moses specifies as affecting his posterity on that account, are of a corporeal and temporal nature, viz. *tabor, sorrow, and death*. It is *possible*, indeed, that the body being more subject to disease, the mind may be more feeble, and therefore more prone to comply with some temptations; but then it should also be considered, that a sickly constitution is favourable to many virtues, and we see that a state of confirmed health is often highly dangerous in a

But if the sufferings of mankind in consequence of Adam's sin be *real evils*, must we not allow either that Adam was constituted the federal head of his posterity, or else, that God does a piece of injustice for the present because he intends somehow or other to make it up hereafter. That is, he does evil, that good may come. The most dishonorable thought, perhaps, it is possible for us to entertain of the Divine Being; and for my own part, sooner than I could admit such a sentiment, I should embrace * *Manicheism*, or, I had almost said, *Atheism* itself.

Besides, are we not deprived in consequence of Adam's sin, as well as exposed to a variety of external calamities? And can we imagine this to be a benefit? Can we look upon this as a *salutary medicine*? Perhaps you'll deny the fact, and insist upon it that man when he is born into the world now, bears upon him as fair an impress of the *divine image*, as the first man when he came out of the hands of his maker. That he is not born in the image or likeness of *fallen sinful man*, but in the upright image

moral respect; so that upon the whole it is probable that our condition is *MORE FAVORABLE to virtue than that of Adam*.¹

Famil. Illustr. p. 11th.

Now what can a plain understanding make of this? We are sufferers, considerable sufferers by the sin of Adam, and we are, upon the whole, no sufferers at all, but rather gainers.—Such is the precision, consistency, and demonstration, of what is very improperly called *rational divinity*.—The character and abilities of the author of the Appeal, I most sincerely and highly venerate; but it is too evident that the brightest intellects are no security against the mills of prejudice, and the slavery of system.

* The *Manichees* taught that there are two *coterminous principles or Gods*, independent on each other, the one the author of all *evil*, the other of all *good*.

image of his God. But if this were really the case, must it not appear strange that amongst all the millions of men that have ever lived, no one have ever lived without sin? And it will not be pretended that any one ever has. If any man say he has no sin, we have apostolical authority to pronounce him a liar. Besides, if any man is now born into the world in the image of God, what reason can there be for his being born again? And yet we are expressly assured that except a man, any man, be born again, born from above, born of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of Heaven. That we must be saved by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. And baptism, whereby this spiritual washing is figuratively represented, is accordingly made the initiating ordinance of the Christian religion.—And indeed what more natural thing itself, than that depraved parents should have depraved children? Can any man bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Doth any man expect to gather grapes from thorns? And when the first man by his apostacy had totally disordered the frame of his own mind, and, in a manner, driven away his God from him, what reason can be assigned why God should return to him again, or interpose to prevent the natural consequences of his apostacy with respect to his posterity,—but what is founded on his free and sovereign mercy?—It is not however supposed that, in consequence of the original apostacy, men are laid under any thing like a natural or mechanical necessity of sinning, but only that they are much more liable to sin, and in less advantageous

advantageous circumstances for the pursuit of holiness than they would, possibly, have otherwise been. All men ~~bit~~ is readily allowed, might act much better than they do, and will be accountable only for not acting, as they might and ought to have done. And therefore, whatever alteration may be made in the state of things by *the fall*, and whatever may be the immediate or remote consequences of it with respect to any of the posterity of Adam, we are assured that we shall all be judged at last according to *the deeds done in the body*, whether they be good, or whether they be evil. Yes, in that tremendous day, *every mouth shall be stopped*, and the righteousness of the divine proceedings be universally acknowledged.

That man is however, upon the whole, in his present fallen state, in such circumstances as will certainly terminate in his utter destruction, if grace prevent not, is most clearly the doctrine of scripture. We there read, that the son of man came to seek and to save *that which was lost*. That God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should *not perish*, but have everlasting life; plainly intimating that our *not perishing* is the fruit of God's love, and not what we could in justice have claimed. That Adam was a *figure of Christ*, and that as death came by the *offence of one*, so life came by the *righteousness of the other*. And finally, that as the wages of sin is *death*, so *eternal life* is the *gift*, the free gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Indeed without supposing man to be in a fallen ruined

ruined lost state, were we ever so unable to account for it, nothing can well be imagined more inexplicable or absurd, than the scripture doctrine of redemption and salvation by the free grace of God through Jesus Christ. To talk of pardoning a rebel never attained would not be more absurd, than it is to talk of saving sinners that were never lost, or redeeming those that were never enslaved. Nor is it more ridiculous and contradictory to style that an act of grace which is merely a piece of justice, than to pretend that the salvation of sinners is by free grace, at the same time that we do not allow they would have been lost, if grace had not interposed on their behalf.

And after all, unless it could be made to appear that we are not guilty depraved creatures, However we became so, it is of infinitely more consequence to know how we may obtain deliverance, than to be able with metaphysical nicety to explain how we came to stand in need of it. And it is indeed mercy not to be described, that whilst we are assured we have destroyed ourselves, in God there is help found.—The next article of the Appeal, treats

IV. Of the doctrine of election and reprobation.

This doctrine so effectually destroys the pride of man, and so entirely ascribes all the glory of his salvation to God, that it is not at all surprizing it should meet with vehement opposition. The carnal mind, and alas ! is there not too much carnality in all our hearts ? is enmity against God. The bitterness

bitterness and rancor generally discovered in the opposition made to this doctrine, do, I think, too plainly manifest from whence that opposition proceeds. Seldom, I fear, from a genuine concern for the glory of God, but too often, from a proud concern for our own. It has been indeed, of late years, so customary to represent this doctrine in the most shocking colors, that I know it will be very difficult to gain the least attention to any thing that may be said in favor of a tenet so exceedingly unpopular. But I hope, my dear friends, you will for once endeavor to lay aside your prejudices, and, whatever may be your present sentiments of this doctrine, at least give it a calm and candid hearing.

That Christians are spoken of in the word of God as having been chosen, or elected of God, and that from all eternity, cannot be denied. See Eph. i. 4. where the apostle Paul speaks of the believers at Ephesus as having been chosen in Christ, before the foundation of the world. And 2 Tim. i. 9, he speaks of grace given to Christians in Christ Jesus, before the world began.—It is further evident that such as are spoken of in scripture as chosen or elected of God from all eternity, are expressly said to be chosen to salvation, and that they shall certainly be saved. See 2 Thess. ii. 13. We are bound to give thanks to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation. And Rom. viii. 29, 30. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be glorified.

be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called, and whom he called, them he also justified, and whom he justified, them he also glorified. See also, John vi. 37—39. All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me. And this is the will of him that sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but raise it up again at the last day.—The scripture farther informs us very clearly, that such as are chosen or elected to salvation, are not chosen from a fore sight of their faith, or repentance, or good works, but that they are chosen to be first holy, and then happy, and that they are chosen according to the good pleasure of his will who chose them. See Eph. i. 4, where we are assured that God chuseth his people not because they were, or because he foresaw they would of themselves be holy, but that they should be holy. And 1 Pet. i. 2, the apostle Peter stiles the people of God, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience. They are not chosen because obedient, but unto obedience here, as preparatory for glory hereafter. They are not chosen to salvation, let them live as they list, as the enemies of this doctrine are for ever affirming, but they are chosen unto holiness as the means, and unto salvation as the end. And in Eph. i. 5, 6, the people of God are expressly said to be predestinated to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will and to the praise of the glory of his grace. And 2 Tim. i. 9. they are said to be saved and called with an holy calling, not according to their works, but according to his

own purpose and grace, which was given them in Christ Jesus before the world began.

Now what shall we say to these things? Like the noble *Bereans*, let me earnestly recommend it to you to search the scriptures, that you may be able impartially to judge for yourselves, whether these things are or are not as they have now been represented to you. Indeed, to an *unprejudiced* mind I should think it must appear as clearly, that the writers of the New Testament and particularly the apostle *Paul*, were *Predestinarians*, as that the writer of the Appeal is, and glories in being a *Socinian*.*

And after all the frightful pictures which have been drawn of this doctrine, what is the sum of it, but—*let him that glorieth glory in the Lord?* Pride was the root of the apostasy, and the whole scheme of salvation by Jesus Christ seems therefore to be admirably calculated to eradicate and destroy this evil accursed temper. Are any ready to boast of what they are, or what they have done? They are taught rather meekly and thankfully to say, *by the grace of God I am what I am.* Instead of being suffered to boast, they are addressed in this humbling strain. + *Who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now, if thou didst receive it, why doth thou glory as if thou hadst not received it? By grace are ye saved through faith, and that NOT OF YOURSELVES, it is the gift of God. Not of works, LEST any man should boast.*

And

* Might I not have added, and a *Necessarian*, and consequently a *Predestinarian*; notwithstanding all the hideous representations he may think proper to make of the *Calvinistic* predestination? See Mr. John Palmer's Letters to the Author on this subject,—upon which I confess I feel myself tempted to say—Out of thy own mouth will I condemn thee.

+ *1 Cor. iv. 7.—Eph. ii. 8.—Rom. xi. 5, 6.*

And again, even so then at this present time also, there is a remnant according to the election of grace; and if by grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace; but if it be of works, then it is no more grace, otherwise work is no more work.

But it will be said perhaps, what becomes of the reprobate, the non-elect? And the old question will be asked, did God make men to damn them?

I answer, if God fore-knew whatever comes to pass, and there are any of the human race damned, then God did most certainly make men that he fore-knew would be damned. There is no possibility of avoiding this conclusion, but either by a flat denial of the fore-knowledge of God, or else by asserting the absolute universality of final salvation. The author of the Appeal says indeed very peremptorily that "a good and merciful God would have put a stop to the propagation of such a race of creatures, rather than suffer them to be born in such shocking circumstances, in which he infallibly foresaw, that the greatest part of them must be exposed to, and even actually suffer remediless destruction." But whatever be the final state of the greatest part of mankind, this writer should have remembred it is not altered by a denial of the doctrine of predestination. Whether this doctrine be true or false, the righteous only shall be saved, and the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God. And whether the greatest part of mankind will be found at the day of judgment, in the former class, or in the latter, the predestinarian has no other rule to judge by than the rest of his fellow Christians, who

may be enemies to this doctrine. If therefore it be allowed that God *foresaw* what *would be* the final ~~state~~^{destiny} of his creatures, then, whatever that state may be with respect to the greatest or the smalleſt part of them, it is an undeniabie fact, that with a foreſight of this, he was pleased to permit their being introduced into the world, and not to put a ſtop to their propagation. The fact iſelf is not at all affeſted by one hypothesis more than another, and if there be ever ſo great a diſſiculty in ac‐^{ting}couting for it, it is a diſſiculty that belongs as muſh to the *focinian* as the *predeſtinarian*.

And even with reſpect to the *the means of ſalvation*, it is undeniably evident that they are not *equally* diſtributed. The gospel is ſent to one nation and not to another, a zealous faithful miſter is raised up to preach the gospel in one place, and not in another; ſome are providentially brought under the miſtry of the gospel, and not others. There is a *ſovereign variety* indeed in *all* the divine diſpenſations, in thoſe of *nature, providence, and grace*. *All* have not an *equal share* with others of *reafon*, of *wealth*, and other *natural enjoyments*, nor even of *moral and ſpiritual advantages*. The gospel, we know, was ſent to *Chorazin* and *Bethſaida*, and not to *Tyre* and *Sidon*; and yet, what may perhaps be thought more aſtoniſhing ſtill, it was known that the inhabitants of *Tyre* and *Sidon* would have im‐proved this privilege if they had enjoyed it, and that the inhabitants of *Chorazin* and *Bethſaida* would only aggrava‐te their condenma‐tion by the abuse of it. If it ſhould be ſuppoſed that thoſe who have not the

the gospel sent to them; are yet in as fair a way for salvation without it, what distinguishing favor can there be in having the gospel, or how can the abuse of it aggravate our guilt and condemnation? Now if all these and such like things come to pass according to the *foreknowledge* of God, there must be, in some respect or other, a *design* that they should so come to pass: for however casual and accidental we may suppose these events to be in themselves, yet if God *foreknew* them, he certainly would by some means or other *prevent* them, if he did not, upon the whole, think it proper to *permit* them to take place. The great God acts, most evidently, in a *sovereign way* in the distribution of his free favors. That is, according to the *good pleasure* of his own *will*. Not from caprice and humor, or to gratify an arbitrary disposition, as the enemies of this doctrine will have it we suppose;—(no, far be it from us to entertain such *impious* thoughts of our God!)—but he acts, we have no doubt, from reasons the most just and wise, though to us *unknown*. And it would be happy were we more disposed to remember, that our *not knowing* the reasons of the divine conduct, differs widely from the great God's acting *without reason*.

But instead of confessing our own ignorance, and humbly leaving secret things to him to whom they belong, shall we fly in the face of our Maker, and arrogantly say unto him, what dost thou? Or, because we know not how to reconcile the mode of proceeding which the great God is pleased to make use of, to our narrow conceptions of things;

shall we raise a violent outcry, and talk of the doctrine of predestination, which is so clearly taught in the bible and so exactly corresponds with the *actual* dispensations of providence and grace, as making God worse than the devil? It really makes me tremble when I think with what indecent rage, and in how very unguarded a manner, many serious, but, as I verily believe, mistaken persons, have expressed themselves upon this subject. The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. And indeed, were the doctrine to be calmly and candidly considered, what occasion would there be for such a *violent* and *outrageous* opposition to it, even though it should not be true?—Does the doctrine of reprobation suppose God to be the author of sin? No. Does it suppose that any are reprobated who yet did all they could to obtain salvation, and *would* have escaped that awful doom if they *possibly* could? No. It supposes that *none* are reprobated *but on the account of wilful sin*, or such as, it was foreseen, would most justly deserve the wrath, to which they *were therefore appointed*. Does it suppose that all the reprobate will be dealt with alike in the day of retribution? No. It supposes that for some it will be *more tolerable* in that day than for others. That all will be judged according to the dispensation under which they lived, the privileges they enjoyed, and the improvement they made of them. That such as * *have sinned without law, shall also perish without law*, and that *as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law*.

Finally,

* Rom. ii. 12.

Finally, does this doctrine suppose that God makes men to damn them? Certainly it does not. Reprobation is grounded solely on the *foresight of sin*, and is governed in its effects by the *different degrees of guilt*. And to suppose that the doctrine of reprobation implies that *any one man would have repented and been saved, if by the decree of reprobation he had not been prevented*, is one of the grossest fallacies that can be imposed upon the human mind. God delighteth not in the death of a sinner, but had rather that he should repent and live, yea, would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth. And therefore he hath done as much to prevent their death, in all his dispensations, as was consistent with his infinite wisdom; and that he has not done what he knew would be *effectual for the salvation of all*, or done as much for some as he has for others, is by no means to be attributed to his *delighting in the death of a sinner*, any more than it can be attributed to his *delighting in sin*, which we are certain he abhors.

Nevertheless, the great God sees fit to give to his apostate creatures, (not his *innocent offspring* as the author of the Appeal would suppose mankind to be,) one, two, five, or ten talents, as it pleaseth him; and as may best answer his infinitely wise and good designs, in his moral government of the universe. Now shall the man that has but *one talent* reflect upon his God because he did not give him *two talents*, and tell his Maker that if he had given him *two talents* as well as his neighbor, he should then

then have been effectually saved; and that it is plain he made him merely to damn him; or else he would have given him as many talents as he gave to some others, *as great a chance of salvation as any of the rest of his fellow creatures?* Or shall the man that has five talents complain that he has not ten; or the man that has ten, reflect upon his God for giving him so many, which he foreknew would be the means of aggravating his condemnation? — The obvious answer to such impious arrogance would be, — shall I not do what I will with my own? Is it not sufficient that none of you are injured, except by your own sin and folly, that you all have in every respect more than you deserve, and that you are to give an account at last of no more than you have received? — With respect to the popular outcry of God's creating men to damn them, it is certain that neither this, nor even the salvation of men, is to be considered as the ultimate design* of Providence; ed nro si aliis sicut vobis possit dolo any et ordinatio sis ex dicto ac ex ynglysh end of

* “The learned in our day will have us to think, that happiness, mere happiness, is the ultimate end and object of the divine government. But whatever reason there is to expect the happiness of the just, there is no ground to believe, that God will make bad men happy. They confidently affirm, that a being completely happy in himself, could have no other end in bringing creatures into existence, than to make them happy. But this is unpardonable rashness. For if the sole end of bringing creatures into being, was to make them happy, then they could not be in pain or misery a single moment; because the Supreme Ruler could not be disappointed of his end in one single instance, or for one moment of time. Plans formed by beings of limited capacity may fail in the execution; but no defect can be imputed to him whose understanding is infinite, and whose power is without control. This hypothesis, therefore, must be fundamentally wrong.

“ In writings on this subject, the sole and ultimate end are put for the same thing; for this reason, that subordinate ends

any of the divine dispensations, "but both the one and the other only as subordinate parts of the *grand drama*, if I may so express it, of God's moral government of the world, and designed to promote that one capital end—THE GLORY OR GOD, the glory

are of the nature of means, that are dropped or pursued with a view only to the ultimate end; which therefore is the sole end in every just plan. Common sense will hardly authorize weak mortals to fix the ultimate end and object of the divine government; but the greatest possible increase of moral worth, seems best to correspond to appearances, and to the dignity of the Supreme Ruler; and probably was meant, in the last age, by the *glory of God*, and is now exchanged for the *happiness of the creature*, by those who favor a more lax theology; the tendency of which error is, to bring down virtue to the rank of a mean, or subordinate end, the place it always held with hypocrites and villains, of all kinds, who regard it no farther than serves their purpose.

"They argue, that every good parent would do every thing, to the utmost stretch of his power, to make his children happy; that there is scarce a man possessed of so little goodness, who, if he had the power, would not make every one who existed, and every one especially whom he brought into existence, as happy as he could make them; and hence conclude peremptorily, that he who exceeds all other beings in goodness, will do every thing possible to make his creatures happy. This, it must be owned, has a specious appearance, and is extremely flattering; and no wonder it should be greedily swallowed. But this is nothing other than reasoning, and a species too of reasoning that is apt to mislead; for it is indeed what Lord Bolingbroke calls making God after the image of man: and, what is worst of all, this fine reasoning, like many other productions of that faculty, is contrary to fact, and to all our ideas of absolute perfection. For it is plain, God doth not all that is possible to be done, to make all his creatures happy; and therefore the happiness of the creature *could not* be the *ultimate end* and object of his government.

"Could we suppose, that the love of his creatures exceeded his love of justice, we might think he would make justice yield and give way to the happiness of his creatures. But this supposition is horrid; and whatever, through the influence of self-love, men may think in their own particular case, it is impossible for a man of sense to entertain this judgement of the divine administration."

Oswald's Appeal to Common Sense, vol. ii. b. 5.
See also *Doddridge's Lectures*, p. 113. Schol. 4.

glory of all the divine perfections. Or, if you chuse to have it expressed more philosophically, to promote the good of the whole, or, as I think it best to say, to promote that end, whatever it be, which the all-wise God knows to be most fit and proper to be promoted.*

That the great God could have effectually saved all mankind, if he had seen fit so to do, cannot be reasonably doubted. Nor is there any reason to believe, but that if it had been best, it should have been so; he would have done it. If it had been really better, more wise or more worthy of God, to have granted to any of the reprobate greater advantages than they have, doubtless they would have had them. God does nothing by chance, or at random; but worketh all things according to the COUNSEL of his own will. And till we are able to inform our Maker how he might have done better than he has, it becomes us, instead of quarrelling with his dispensations, humbly to acquiesce in all he hath done, meekly saying, + even so Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight.—The inference from the whole is this. Every man's salvation is of God, and of his free, discriminating grace; and every man's damnation is of and from himself. And were we to consider the matter properly, instead of wondering that so many perish, and that God does no more for them that perish, we should rather wonder that any are saved.

But

* If this be not the genuine doctrine of the New Testament, concerning this point, how could the apostle Paul suppose it possible to make such an objection to it as he mentions Rom. ix. 19. *Thou wilt say then unto me, why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will?* But if you will consult the original Greek, you will find that Matt. xi. 23. is the true reading, + Matt. xi. 23. is the true reading,

But the author of the Appeal insists upon it that this *“ is certainly a doctrine of *licentiousness*, and that let divines employ all the ingenuity they are masters of, it is impossible for them to clear this doctrine from being the cause of *fatal despair* in some, and as *fatal a security* in others.”†

I cannot pretend to account for the operations of another man's mind, but I am clearly of opinion, that it requires *much more ingenuity* to make good this assertion, than to prove that it has no foundation in truth to support it.—How can the doctrine of *election* be a *licentious doctrine*, when it supposes the elect, chosen to *holiness* as the *means*, as *much as* to *happiness* as the *end*? Or how can the doctrine of *reprobation* be a *licentious doctrine*, when it supposes the reprobate to perish *entirely on the account of sin*? It is far from supposing any decree that they *shall* sin in such a manner and degree, and then be damned for it; whereas, if it had not been for such a decree, they would not have sinned as they did, and consequently would not have been damned. Nor does it suppose that the reprobate *shall* be damned, do what they *will*, or even do what they *can*; but it supposes that they *will not* do what they *might* and *could* have done, and that, on this account, they *shall* be punished. If the divine foresight of their wilful impenitence, of their filling up the measure of their iniquities, be supposed to fail, the decree built upon it must of course fail also.

How then can it be pretended that the doctrine of *election* is *in quo non debet esse*?

* Appeal, page 12th.
† Do not these objections equally lye against the doctrine of *NECESSITY*, of which the Author of the Appeal is so zealous a patron?

election and reprobation, leads to licentiousness? Does it lead to licentiousness to say,—none but *renewed holy souls* shall be saved, and *all impenitent unholy sinners* shall be damned? If it does, then this is a *licentious doctrine indeed*; but, if not, surely it must be allowed that whether true or false, it is nevertheless, a *doctrine according to godliness*.

But it leads to *despair*? I ask, how? Why, I suppose, because it is *possible* for a man to be so absurd and impious as to say, “if I am not elected, do whatever I will, I shall not be saved, and therefore I'll not concern myself about salvation.” But supposing a man to act upon this principle, and in consequence of it to abandon himself to all manner of wickedness; how easy would it be for a *fellow creature* to convict and confound him? And with how much greater ease may we suppose the great God who knows all things, able to do it? Might it not with propriety be said to such a man,—It was impossible for thee to know thou wast not elected, and therefore thy *not being elected could not have any influence* upon thy conduct. However, know, thou art condemned, not because thou wast not elected, but because thou hast wilfully and wickedly abused the privileges granted thee; and thy misery thou wilt find proportioned to thy guilt? A farmer might as well refuse to plough and sow his ground, because he is not *sure* of a crop, as a sinner refuse to concern himself about salvation, because he is not *sure* that he shall be saved. And this objection seems the more absurd from an opposer of the calvinistic doctrines, because no man can ever be sure of salvation, upon any other plan, till he is actually saved;

saved, whereas the Calvinist professes to believe, that wherever a good work of grace is begun in the soul, it shall be compleated. And supposing a poor sinner to be really concerned about the salvation of his soul, what discouragement can he meet with, at his first setting out any more than in his future progress, from the doctrine of election? Does the doctrine of election contradict the invitations and promises of the gospel? When Christ says, *Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest; and him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out;*—does the doctrine of election teach us to put in, if ye are elected? No, my brethren; the doctrine of election leaves these and all such like passages of scripture in their full force and meaning, not throwing one grain of discouragement in the way of any one contrite awakened sinner. All the doctrine of election does in this case is this; when the sinner is brought savingly to Christ and created anew in him, it teaches him to ascribe it, not to himself, but unto God and his free grace. It teaches him to conclude, that had he been left entirely to his own will he would never have come to Christ, but have obstinately continued estranged from him. In short, it teaches him to conclude, with the apostle Paul, that * *it is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.* That is, that none do effectually will nor run of themselves, but that such as are made willing are made so in the day of divine power, and have reason therefore to cry out, not

D

unto

* Rom. ix. 16.

unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be all the glory.

Nor can the doctrine of election lead any to a *fatal security*, any more than to *despair*. What *security* does this doctrine give to a man that loves and lives in sin? The elect of God are chosen *unto obedience*, and through *sanctification of the spirit*: how then can any that are prevailingly *unholy*, have the least evidence of their being elected?

Upon the whole, whether you receive this doctrine or reject it, it may be proper for you to bear in mind the following observations concerning it.

It does by no means make any one man more *sinful* or more *miserable*, than he would have been otherwise. It alters not the cause or reasons of men's perishing. It adds not to the number of those that are supposed to perish. And therefore the *predestinarian* may, with just as much propriety as the *Socinian*, become the father of children.* All that can be fairly said of this doctrine is, that it supposes what is plainly matter of fact, that the great God, who is good to all and whose tender mercies are over all his works, for *infinitely wise* but to us unknown reasons, does *more* for the salvation of some, than of others. That he does what *he knows will be effectual* for the salvation of some, but that he leaves others in such a state as he *knows will terminate*, through their own fault, in perdition. And that he cannot be supposed to act in this manner by chance but *design*. That he calls however none to an account but for the abuse of privileges they actually enjoyed,

* See the Appeal, page 11.

enjoyed, and for not doing what it was strictly just in him to require them to do. In short, it only supposes the *absolute, unlimited foreknowledge* of God, and that God has some *design* in what he does. That this design, nevertheless, is not to circumvent, ensnare, or deal in any respect *injustly* or *unkindly* with any of his creatures, but so to conduct himself with respect to them all, them that are saved and them that perish, as may best serve to promote, as I have before observed, his own *glory*, or *that end*, whatever it be, that is most worthy to be promoted, and from which the *greatest good* will be ultimately derived.

Nor can this doctrine be consistently denied, how mad soever men may be in their opposition to it, unless we deny, as the candid will allow, the fore-knowledge of God. And yet, to deny the fore-knowledge of God, what is it, in its apparent consequences, but to deny, I had almost said, the existence of a God? For if you take away the absolute unlimited prescience of God, you have a God that is liable every moment to be disappointed in his intentions, surprised with unexpected occurrences, and confounded in his wisest schemes. And even then, before any advantage is gained in this argument by the denial of God's prescience, we must suppose, what appears to me impious in the highest degree to suppose, that if God had foreknown how things would have come to pass, he would have acted otherwise than he has done.

The author of the Appeal has a hint upon the doctrine of perseverance, which, like all the other

doctrines, he levels with a stroke. He asks, "What reason the apostle Paul had to exhort Christians to take heed lest they should fall, 1 Cor. x. 12.* when none that ever did stand could possibly fall?" The answer to this, and every such question, is ready. Because taking heed is as much the appointed means of Christians not falling, as their not falling is the appointed end to be answered by those means. And that a man of understanding and candor, (and such I am very ready to suppose the author of the Appeal to be,) should be capable of deluding himself with such superficial reasoning as that which is grounded on the supposition of the means not being connected with the end, is really astonishing.

But I may be thought, perhaps, to have been too prolix upon this metaphysical subject already, and must not therefore enlarge. Nor should I have said so much upon it, but that I have long been convicted the doctrine of election and reprobation is a doctrine which has been somehow or other strangely misrepresented, and very little understood; and it appears to me, that the humble reception of it would have the happiest influence upon the tempers and lives of sincere Christians. There are however, I am sensible, many eminent and amiable Christians who have strong prejudices against this unpopular notion. And perhaps they may find it difficult to admit me to their Christian friendship, because I have attempted a defence of it. But whatever may be their sentiments of me, I do from the bottom of my heart embrace all of them, with

* Should not the Author of the Appeal, as a Necessarian, answer this question himself.

the sincerest affection, as my fellow Christians and brethren in the Lord; and, conscious of my own fallibility and many imperfections, am ready to say, whereunto we have attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. It is not long ere that happy day will arrive, when every error shall be chased away, and we shall all see as we are seen and know as we are known.

In the mean time, it is a sincere pleasure to me to think that many of my fellow christians who may not approve of what I have said concerning election, will yet cordially harmonize with me in what I may offer under the next head to be treated of, which is

V. *The Divinity of Christ.*

Few Christians are entirely unacquainted with the many unhappy debates there have been in the Christian church, in every age, upon this important subject.

Some, acknowledging the divinity of Christ, have denied his proper humanity, supposing that he only appeared as a man but was not really so.—Others, denying his divinity, allow him to have had only humanity, making him, as the author of the Appeal does, *a mere man*, the same kind of being with ourselves, and *no more*. Others again, not able to reconcile either of these opinions with the scripture account of the Savior, take a middle way, and suppose the Lord Jesus Christ to have been a compound being, neither *God* nor *Man* absolutely, but a being by himself, made up of a *human body*, united, not

to a *human soul*, but to a *superangelic spirit*. And these opinions have been compounded and subdivided into many lesser and subordinate ones.

Now it is very certain that these *contradictory opinions* cannot be *all* true, nor all taught in the word of God. And yet, without some *appearance* of truth to support them, how can we account for it upon the principles of candor and charity, that such contrary tenets should be held, by those who *all* profess to receive the *bible* as the common rule of their faith, and the only standard of their religious sentiments?

It is not surely *improbable*, that *each* of these tenets may contain *some* truth as well as falsehood, and that from them all, the *whole truth*, as it is revealed to us in God's word, may be fairly collected.

The first opinion allows the *divinity* of Christ, and we may suppose is so far true; but *denies* his *humanity*, and therein appears to be erroneous. For if *Christ* was not a *real man*, how shall we be able to prove there ever was, or now is any such being in the world? He *appeared* as a man, he is *called* a man, he endured *bodily hunger*, thirst, pain, was grieved in *spirit*, wept and rejoiced; and if, notwithstanding all this he was not a *real man*, what proof can we bring that there is any such being now in existence? "Christ being made by the immediate hand of God, and not born in the usual course of generation, is no reason (as the author of the Appeal very justly observes,) for his not being considered as a man, for then Adam must not have been a man."—But yet the persons who entertained this notion concerning Christ, knew not how to

reconcile

reconcile the idea of his *real humanity* with that of his *proper divinity*, and therefore, being fully convinced of his divinity, were led to imagine his humanity was only *phantasial* or in *appearance*.

The second opinion is exactly the reverse of this. It supposes the *humanity* of Christ to have been real, and so far is true; but denies his *divinity*, insisting upon it that he was a *mere man* and *no more*, that he had no existence till born of the virgin; and therein, it appears from scripture to be false.

Could a *mere man* that had no existence till he came into this world, have said of himself, with any truth or propriety, what Christ says of *himself*? * *Before Abraham was I am. I came forth from the father, and am come into the world, again, I leave the world and go to the father. I am Alpha and Omega, the root and offspring of David, the bright and morning star. Father, glorify me with the glory I had with thee before the world began!* Surely this is strange language for a *mere man* to make use of concerning himself, and the bible must be a *prodigiously figurative* and an *amazingly obscure* book, if all these expressions in it are to be accommodated to a *mere man*. But this is not all. We read in scripture that Christ being in the form of God, *took* upon him the form of a servant. Now these expressions seem naturally to intimate, that the form of a servant was a form that did not originally belong to him, but a form which he *voluntarily assumed*. Yet, if he was no more than a *mere man*, what form *but* that of a servant could belong to him; or with what propriety

* John viii. 58.—xvi. 28. Rev. i. 8.—xxii. 16. John xvii. 5.

priety could he be represented as taking this form upon him, and his doing so be mentioned as an instance of his humility? If he was no more than a mere man like ourselves, and had no existence till born of the virgin, how could he be in the form of God antecedently to his taking upon him the form of a servant? which yet he is expressly said to have been. And if even the words in this passage of scripture, *he thought it no robbery to be equal with God*, were to be rendered *he did not think of the robbery of being equal with God*; can any thing be more strange, than to have it urged as an example of humility, and a pattern for our imitation, that Jesus Christ being a mere man, and very well knowing himself to be no more, *did not think of such an impious robbery as being equal with God*? Let us see how the apostle's reasoning will run upon this supposition. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus; who being a mere man like yourselves, not an angel or like any super-angelic being but a mere man, was far from thinking of such an impious robbery as being equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, that is, gave up what he never had, and took upon him the form of a servant; it never having been put to his option whether he would be of any other form, this being the only form which as a mere man could possibly belong to him. Because Christ being a mere man did not aim to be a God which he had no right to, therefore do you learn not to look on your own things, nor to insist on what you have a right to.—Is this the reasoning of the

great apostle Paul ? At the feet of Gamaliel, and in the school of inspiration, did he learn to reason after this manner ? Let him speak for himself. And his language is, * Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus ; who *being in the form of God*, thought it not robbery to be equal with God : but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant. The same apostle, in another place, † represents the grace and love of the Lord Jesus Christ as strikingly exemplified, in that though he was rich before he came into this world, yet *for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty, might be rich.* But how absurd would this passage be upon the supposition of Christ's being but a mere man like ourselves ? Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, how that though he was not an angel or a superangelic being but a mere man, and consequently before he came into the world not only had nothing to lose but had not even existence, yet, for your sakes, he became, having never been otherwise, poor, that ye, through his poverty, which he could not help, might be rich. More astonishing still, upon the supposition that Christ was a mere man, as the author of the Appeal peremptorily avers, are the words of the apostle John concerning him. *In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. And the*

* Phil. ii. 5, 6, 7.

† 2 Cor. viii. 9.

word

word was made flesh, † and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory of the ONLY BEGOTTEN of the Father, full of grace and truth. How are all these things to be reconciled with the idea of Christ's being but a mere man? — He had no beginning till he was born of the virgin about 1780 years ago, and yet was in the beginning with God. He was a mere man, and yet absolutely God. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made; and yet he himself was made, and many millions of men and things were made before him. The world was made by him, and yet the world was made 4000 years before him. The word that was in the beginning with God and was God, was made flesh; and yet Christ was not made and had no existence, till he was born of the virgin, and appeared in flesh. His disciples beheld his glory as the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, whilst he dwelt amongst them; and yet he had then no peculiar glory for them to behold, nor was he the only begotten son of God till he had entitled himself to that dignity by his exemplary obedience, nor did he enjoy it till after his resurrection from the dead.—How these palpable contradictions may strike your minds, my brethren, I cannot say. But for my part, I freely acknowledge, that if I were once to suppose it possible the scriptures should be thus glaringly inconsistent, I should despair of learning any one truth from them with any kind of certainty

† This passage, with many others of the like nature, the author of the Appeal tells us, relates to God the Father only. O prejudice, how amazing is thine influence! — See Familiar Illustration, page 30.

tainty, and should therefore be ready, with the Rev. Mr. Venn, to commit my *bible* to the flames as an useless unprofitable book, how much soever the author of the *Appeal* might divert himself at the ceremony.

The third opinion, endeavors to avoid the absurdities of the two preceding ones, and seems to aim at *compromising* the matter by taking a *middle way*. The patrons of this hypothesis acknowledge that Christ is *more than a mere man*, that he had an existence long before he came into the world, but that nevertheless he is not *God*, unless by office or as an inferior God to the Father, nor yet strictly speaking, *man*, except only by his having a *human body*. They suppose him to be an *intermediate being* betwixt God and man, a *super-angelic divine spirit* united to a *human body*. *More than man, less than God*.—But plausible as this scheme may appear to many, it will not stand the test of a scriptural examination. It allows to Christ neither *Deity* nor *humanity*, but makes him a strange *mysterious compound of both*, and at the same time does not admit him to be, properly speaking, possessed of either. Now all those passages of scripture which speak of the *humanity* of Christ, do as much contradict this notion of his person as those which speak of his *Deity*. Is Christ styled *a man* of sorrows and the *man* Christ Jesus; and do we read that as by *man* came death by *man* came also the resurrection from the dead? Then certainly Christ was a *real man* or he would never have been styled so. But to constitute real and proper *humanity*, a *human soul* is as necessary as

a human

a *human body*. And it is very evident Christ was as much possessed of the one as of the other. We read that his *soul* was exceeding sorrowful even unto death, as well as that his *body* sweat great drops of blood to the ground. He was then *really man*, not so in *appearance* only, or but *partly* so as having a *human body*, but truly and properly so, as much so, which the author of the Appeal very justly observes, as any of the Jews were, or as we ourselves are. This *half-way* scheme, as *Arianism* may be fitly called, will never reconcile the scripture account of Jesus Christ. There seems to be no room from scripture to doubt of the *full* and *proper humanity* of the Redeemer. The most material questions that can fairly arise upon this subject, are these two. Whether Christ be possessed of any *other nature* besides the *human*? and, if so, *what* that nature is? Now that Christ is possessed of *another nature* besides the *human*, all those passages which have been already mentioned, and which speak so fully of his *pre-existence*, clearly prove. The *human nature* he possessed not till his *incarnation*, but he existed long before his incarnation, or, when the Jews said to him thou art not yet fifty years old and hast thou seen Abraham? he would never have replied as he did,— * *Verily I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am.* The only remaining question is, *what nature* Christ possessed *before* his incarnation, or *who he was ANTECEDENT* to his appearance in *human nature*. Whatever he was before, he *then became also man*, it is readily allowed, but the

turning

* John viii. 58.

turning point in this controversy is, who became man ? or, what nature did he possess before he became man ?

In answering this question, we have *nothing* to do with the *exaltation* of Christ, subsequent to his incarnation obedience sufferings and death, and as the reward of his acquired merit, but are simply to attend to what is said concerning him *previous* to his entrance upon the stage of mortality. In whatever sense *he was* afterwards *abased*, he must certainly be capable of exaltation. And the mediatorial kingdom, which as *Mediator* he *received*, may undoubtedly be *delivered up again*. But the question is, *who was first abased and then exalted?*

And were we to divest ourselves of prejudice, how easily might we obtain satisfaction upon this important and interesting point ! As to the pre-existence of the *human soul* of Christ, which some very good men have warmly contended for, I would beg leave to observe, that there seems little propriety in calling a glorified spirit a *human soul*, which is supposed to have been created, and to have abed in a separate state, thousands of years before it was united to a *human body*; or, if we should allow of this, it is certain that many passages of scripture which speak of the pre-existence of Christ, cannot be understood as referring to the pre-existence of his *human soul*, but must be understood, as the favorers of this peculiar notion concerning the person of Christ were ready to acknowledge, in an infinitely higher sense. The scriptures are indeed very full and express in assuring us, that

he who took human nature into union with that original nature he possessed before, was the eternal son of God, the son of the Father in truth, the only-begotten son of God, not the person of the Father, but fully of the same nature and essence, yea, the BRIGHTNESS of his GLORY, (what expressions can be stronger?) and the express image of his PERSON. That previous to his incarnation he was as fully and truly the son of God, as he was afterwards the son of man.

" That good men are often called in scripture " the children and the sons of God, (to use the " words of a masterly writer upon this subject,) and " that all intellectual beings whatever may, in one " sense, be said to be his offspring, is undeniable : " but there is nothing more evident, than that the " whole tenor of scripture represents the sonship of " the Messiah as peculiar to himself. In both Old " and New Testament he is constantly represented " as heir by right of geniture, not by adoption ; " begotten, the first-begotten, and the only begot- " ten heir of all things, visible and invisible : essen- " tially distinct from all the celestial spirits, for to " which of them says the apostle (Heb. i. 5.) did " God ever say, at any time, thou art my son, this " day I have BEGOTTEN thee ? And hence the " Messiah is always mentioned as a son of the same " nature with his Father. The human nature of " a son is equal to that of his father : and perfectly " analogous to this is that equality to God, which the " apostle tells us the Messiah thought no acquisition. " That the Jews had the same ideas of the sonship " of the Christ, and that our Saviour claimed such " sonship

" sonship is certain. The Jews sought to kill him,
 " the apostle John tells us, because he said God was
 " his father, making himself equal with God : that
 " is, making himself the *literal* son of the divine
 " nature. But did our Saviour ever endeavour to
 " refute this idea of the Jews ? So far from it, he
 " confirmed them in it. When the high-priest ad-
 " jured him to tell him, *art thou the Christ the son of*
 " *God ?* which in the mouth of a Rabbi of that age
 " expressly means, art thou the Christ the person
 " whom the prophecies call the begotten son of
 " God, whose goings forth have been from the days
 " of eternity, (Mic. v. 2.) and equal to God in the
 " divine nature ? (See *John* v. 18, and x. 33.) To
 " this our Saviour replies in the Jewish affirmative,
 " Σὺ εἶπας. *It is as thou hast said ;* and alludes to
 " the prophecy of Daniel, (Dan. vii. 13, 14.) and
 " the 110th psalm, both distinguished predictions
 " of the greatness of the Messiah. The high-priest
 " on this rends his cloaths, (Matt. xxvi. 65.) and
 " exclaims, *he has spoken blasphemy !* What farther
 " need have we of witnesses ? Now, if they did
 " not esteem the sonship of the Christ as different
 " from that of all other beings, partaking as a son
 " of the essence of the Deity, where were the blas-
 " phemy ? The inference is evident, Christ was
 " crucified for asserting his divinity. I do not re-
 " member (the author adds) to have seen the argu-
 " ment drawn from the opinion of the Jews urged
 " before, though it is of the greatest consequence ;
 " for of however little importance their opinion
 " may be when considered merely as their own

" idea, it receives the greatest weight when we
 " find our Saviour not only agreeing to it, but his
 " claiming the sonship of the Christ according to
 " their own ideas of it, the only accusation on
 " which they could condemn him. In this view
 " the ideas of the Jews, as to the sonship of the
 " Messiah, become completely decisive."*

Indeed, were we content to receive the plain declarations of scripture, what could be more evident than the true and *proper divinity* of our blessed Savior? Are we not as fully informed that before he came into the world he was *in the form of God*, as that when he came into the world he sustained *the form of a servant*. That he who was, after his incarnation, *in the world as man*, *made* the world as *God*. That he was *as truly* in the beginning with *God*, and *God*, as that he *was made flesh*. As truly the mighty *God*, as an *infant of days*. The root as well as *offspring* of David. And that Moses was faithful only as a *servant* in the house of *God*, but Christ as a *son* over his own house?

It is easy to talk and complain of the ambiguity and obscurity of scripture concerning this doctrine, but the fault is in our own minds, not in the scripture

* The truth and propriety of the following quotation from a little tract called, *The Triumph of Truth*, page 19, published by the author of the Appeal, I refer to the judgment of the reader.

" If Christ had not satisfied the Jews that he did not mean to make himself equal with God, would they not have produced it against him at his trial, when he was condemned as a blasphemer, because he confessed that he was the *Christ only*; and yet no Jew expected any thing more than a *man* for their Messiah, and our Savior nowhere intimated that they were mistaken in that expectation."

ture which is exceedingly plain and easy to be understood, could we be content without being wise *above* what is written.

That Christ as man and mediator is inferior to the Father, is as certain as that he took upon him the form of a servant. And as it is in this form we have principally to do with him, we cannot justly wonder that so much should be said of him in this character. But to imagine that what is said of him *in the form of a servant*, implies that *no other form* belongs to him, is to overturn from the very foundation the whole of that *amazing love* which the scriptures constantly represent as being strikingly exhibited in the *incarnation and obedience* of the son of God. And how much soever some men may ridicule the attempt to solve the difficulties that arise upon this subject, by having recourse to the distinction of the two natures in the person of Christ, 'tis a distinction the scripture authorises, and there are many passages which cannot be consistently explained without it.

But the grand objection to this doctrine is its mysteriousness and incomprehensibility. The author of the Appeal, as many have done before him, so that the simile is worse quite threadbare, puts it upon a level with transubstantiation itself. "After exalting a man into a God, he says, they made a piece of bread into one also." But this writer mistakes the matter. No Athanafian pretends to exalt a man into a God; this is a Socinian fiction. Tis then Socinian who whilst he maintains that Christ is by nature only man, yet supposes that

as the reward of his obedience, he is exalted to the dignity of a *God*, or, at least, a *demi-god*. However, when the author of the Appeal brings as convincing proof of *transubstantiation*, as the scripture furnishes of the *divinity of Christ*, I shall certainly embrace that doctrine: But laying aside the frightful representations which have been given of the doctrine I am pleading for and examining impartially into it, shall we not find that much of the pretended mysteriousness of it arises rather from the confusion of our own minds in conceiving of it, than from any real obscurity in the doctrine itself? At the same time that there is but *one God who* is principally made known unto us under the character of the *Father*, and we are certain that the pretended deities of the heathen are by nature *no gods*; why should it be thought incredible that this *divine Father* should have a *Son of the same nature* with himself, not of *another*, much less of an *opposite* nature, but partaking of the *same nature* with him, the *brightness* of his glory, and the *express image* of his person? But perhaps it will be said parents must necessarily exist before their children, and the idea of *sonship* necessarily involves in it that of *derivation*. To this it may be replied, similes ought never to be strained, and it is exceedingly clear, that if the *Father* ever existed *without the Son*, it is impossible, in the case before us, that the *Son* should be of the *same nature* with his *Father*, the *Son of the Father in truth*, or the *express image* of his person, as the *Son of God* is expressly said to be. And further, should there be a third person revealed to us proceeding from

from the Father and the Son, known by the name of the *Holy Spirit*, and whose oneness with the Father and Son, is supposed to be as real as the oneness betwixt the spirit of a man and a man ; what is there contradictory and absurd in the idea ? Or if the *Son of God* is represented as taking *human nature* into union with his own *original nature*, so as to become without confounding the two distinct natures, *truly man* or truly possessed of the human nature, as much as he was before *truly god* or a partaker of the *divine nature* ; what is there *contrary to reason* in this representation, how much soever it may be, as almost every thing is, above our reason ?

It will still be said, you hereby make *three gods*, and you might as well make *three hundred* ; for it is positively asserted in scripture, that unto us Christians there is but *one god* the *Father*, and *one mediator* betwixt god and man, the *man Christ Jesus*. Now it is readily allowed we make the *Son* and *Spirit* partakers of the *same nature* with the *Father*, and consequently maintain that there are **THREE** that bear record in heaven, (whether this much disputed text be genuine or not) even the *Father*, the *Son*, and *Holy Ghost*. * But then it is well known we

* Mr. Holwell in his interesting historical events relative to the province of Bengal, though he professes himself a *Unitarian*, yet when speaking of what he calls *primitive truths* which had forcibly been impressed on the mind of man in the beginning, has this remarkable observation concerning the doctrine of a *trinity*. "One of the most important of these primitive truths was, the notion of *three prime created celestial beings*, either *confounded with*, or, exclusive of and subordinate to the Deity. Thus the *Brazmins* have their *Birma*, *Bijnoo*, and *Sieb* ; the *Persians* their *Oromazes*, *Mythra*, and *Mythras* ; the *Egyptians* their *Osyris*, *Isis*, and

as strenuously maintain, whether our conceptions of the matter be just or not, that these three are not three jarring rival contending deities of different natures from one another, *not*, properly speaking, three Gods; but that though they are distinct in person and relative character, yet in the most essential respect, even as to their nature or essence, they are ONE. And there is therefore unto us but one God, the Father; the Son and Spirit not being, with respect to Deity, distinct from the Father, nor setting up any claim in opposition to him, nor having any pretence to divinity but what arises from an union or absolute oneness, in point of nature, with the Father. And as in the œconomy of our salvation the Father alone personally acts in the supreme character, (the Son and Spirit in consequence of the eternal counsels of peace relative to the salvation of sinners acting in subordinate characters,) there seems to be the more propriety, in speaking of the unity

" and Orus; the ancient Arabs their Allat, Al-Uzza, and Manah; the Phenicians and Tyrians their Belus, Urania, and Adonis; the Greeks and Romans their Jupiter, Olympus, Minerva, and Apollo; the Americans their Othon, Messou, and Atahauta; the Christians their Father, Son and Holy Ghost, &c., &c. And we doubt not says Mr. Holwell, but a similar doctrine might be traced among all the different nations of the earth, had we authentic records of their primitive religious institutes." He adds, " To a notion so universal in the first times, we think ourselves warranted in giving the title of a primitive truth, which must have had unerring fact, and a divine revelation for its source and foundation, as well as the other primitive truths, of the rebellion, fall, and punishment of part of the angelic host, &c."

'Tis true, Mr. Holwell calls the three beings he speaks of created, but how they could then be confounded with the Deity he does not explain. And if all three were created, what celestial being did any of these nations acknowledge, it might be asked, as uncreated? Who was deemed by the Bramins higher than their Birmah, or by the Persians than their Oromazes, &c.?

of God as opposed to the polytheism of the heathen, to express it in the manner the apostle does in the passage referred to. * *Though there are, says the apostle, that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many and lords many) but unto us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ,* or, as he expresses himself more fully in his epistle to Timothy, + *one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.* Christians, and to such the apostle wrote, could never be supposed to mistake the meaning of what is here said, as though the apostle intended by it to deny the unity of the Son and Spirit with the Father. All he affirms is this. In the first place, that whilst the heathen nations acknowledged many gods of different ranks and orders, Christians acknowledge but one God, the Father: not however to the exclusion of the Son and Spirit, for it is well known the Son and Spirit are not *supposed*, by the most zealous trinitarians, to be two beings of a different nature or of a different rank or order from the Father, but in nature and essence, *absolutely one with him.* In the next place, the apostle affirms that whilst Heathens had many Lords or mediators, many departed heroes of whom they boasted, Christians had but one Lord or Mediator, the man Christ Jesus. That is, unless we suppose the apostle to contradict himself, He who being *in the form of God* (as St. Paul expresses it in his epistle to the Philippians) *became man, or took upon him the form of a servant,* in order that he might be *one of us, partaking of our infirmities, and qualified*

* 1 Cor. viii. 5, 6.

+ 1 Tim. ii. 5.

qualified to act in the infinitely important character under which he is chiefly represented to us, that of *mediator* between God and men. And it is therefore acknowledged without hesitation, that the general mode of worship exhibited to us in the New Testament, is *through Christ* as mediator, *by the assistance of the Holy Spirit* as the great guide and comforter of the church, *unto the Father*, who always acts *personally* in the supreme character: from whom therefore every blessing is derived, *through the mediation of the Son*, and *by the agency* of the good Spirit,—and who is, as the scriptures plainly teach us, *with the Son and Spirit, one God over all, blessed for evermore.*

If the *Son* and *Spirit* are not one with the *Father* in nature and essence, however distinct in person and subordinate in office, to me it seems passing strange, and it is what, in my opinion, no one has ever yet given any tolerable account of, that they should be joined together with the *Father* in one and the same solemn religious rite; I mean that of Christian baptism. I am sensible it has been urged, that we read of the Israelites being baptized *unto Moses*, in the cloud and in the sea. But it is easy to reply, this was not *real* baptism but is only spoken of in *allusion* to that ordinance. Or if it were otherwise, it would still be widely different to read of the Israelites being baptized *into the name of Moses*, and of Christians being baptized *into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*. Is it credible that two creatures, and one of them a mere man like ourselves, should be joined together in one and

and the same religious rite, and that we should be at the same time, and by the use of the same words, solemnly devoted to the *eternal God*, a *mere man*, and a *created spirit*? To me, nothing can appear more monstrously absurd, not to say impious. And indeed, if the Son and Spirit be not truly possessed of the same divine nature with the Father, how we can reconcile their having the *same divine* names, titles, attributes and works ascribed to them, as they most evidently have; or if Christ be not by *nature* the *Son of God*, how there ever could have been any *adequate* foundation for his *mediatorial exaltation*; it surpasses, I freely own, the narrow bounds of my limited mind in any measure to comprehend.

But still the author of the Appeal will insist upon it, and hereby seems to suppose he gives a decisive stroke to the *Athanasians*, (for so the Trinitarians must be contented to be called,) that "it is expressly contrary to our reason that *three* should be *one*, and *one three*, and that it can never appear to us to be so." What a play upon words is this! Is it necessary for us at this time of day to repeat, that we by no means think the three divine persons in the Godhead to be *three* in the *same sense* in which they are *one*, or *one* in the *same sense* in which they are *three*? How often must we declare, that we believe they are *three* only with respect to *person* and *office*, and *one* in a very different sense, even with respect to *nature* or *essence*. We believe no more upon this sublime subject, than we understand. For with respect to the *precise modus* of the divine existence,

existence, as we neither have nor can have any determinate ideas concerning it, we do not and cannot believe any thing concerning it.

The Unitarians, as those call themselves who maintain the unity of divine *personality* as well as *nature*, seem to imagine that by rejecting the commonly received doctrine of the unity of the Son and Spirit with the Father, they get clear of all obscurity, and are enabled to form clear ideas of the great object of their worship. But, I think, they are mistaken. Have they any other ideas of the Great Being they profess to worship, than the ideas of certain properties attributes and perfections which he is supposed to be possessed of? If they say God is a *Spirit*, and it is absurd to expect any other ideas of a *Spirit* than the ideas of certain essential properties, attributes, and perfections;—then let them acknowledge that these ideas their brethren enjoy in common with themselves, and in every respect to as much advantage surely, for all the purposes of practical piety. Or, if they are still determined to triumph over us as believing we know not what, and imagine they have entirely discarded all *mystery*, because they think they have proved that the *eternal God*, as distinct from all pretended deities, is one PERSON, let them give us their determinate ideas of the word *person* as applied to the *eternal God*, and it will be no difficult matter to prove these ideas utterly inconsistent with the essential nature of God. The word *person* always carries in it the idea of *limitation*, but the Deity is and must be absolutely infinite and *unlimited*. As

to any positive direct conceptions of the great God, absolutely considered, the *Unitarian* and *Trinitarian* are on a level. To the one as well as to the other, it may be said with equal propriety,—* *Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?* No. As well mightest thou attempt to measure the waters of the ocean in the hollow of thine hand, or to mete out the heavens with a span. Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness! But nevertheless it is an irrefragable fact, that *God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.*

Upon the whole, judge my brethren for yourselves, which of the different opinions that have been briefly represented to you, is most consistent with itself, and with the word of God. I have endeavored honestly and without the least intended disguise, to set before you the ideas of my own mind upon this important subject, but have not a wish to influence your minds, any farther than there may appear to be any force in the reasoning I have made use of.

How far the giving up the doctrine I have been pleading for, and which is so clearly and fully taught in the scriptures, might contribute to the conversion either of Jews or Mahometans, or what advantage they would receive from such a kind of conversion, I am not at all concerned to determine. I am sure it cannot be right to do evil, though the pretence for it may be *that good may come.* And as

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to

* Job ii. 7.

to the poor Jews particularly, there seems to be no reason to suppose that the Socinian hypothesis of a mere man's being exalted into a god and made the object of *religious worship*, of how inferior soever a kind the worship be ; can ever be esteemed by them as less tending to idolatry, than the common received opinion of the Savior, which indeed, as we have seen, corresponds with that of the ancient Jews concerning the Messiah. Besides, be this as it will, we very well know that when the gospel was first preached by the apostles themselves, it was foolishness to many of the Greeks, and a stumbling block to many of the Jews ; and we cannot therefore justly wonder if the genuine gospel should be looked upon in the same light by Jews and Mahometans now. But when once their minds are enlightened, and their perverse hearts changed, (let us pray for the advent of that happy hour !) the veil will then be taken off, and with a rapture not to be described, they will be ready to cry out in the language of *Thomas*, *my Lord ! and my God !*

But if Christ be *no more than a prophet* who came to instruct mankind into their duty, of what great moment can it be to have right ideas of his person ? Whether he be *God*, or only a divinely inspired *man*, what does it avail ? In either case, so that his divine *mission* be ascertained, concerning which all Christians are agreed, his instructions are equally important and authentic. This leads me therefore to address you, my friends, on the last and most interesting subject of the Appeal, which is

VI. *The ATONEMENT.*

The author of the Appeal having first degraded the Savior to the rank of a *mere man*, endeavors in the next place, very consistently, to persuade you that he sustained no other character than that of a *mere prophet*. That he made no atonement for sin by his death, nay, that this doctrine is a *popish invention*.

Now I freely confess, if Christ were no more than a *mere man*, it would be absurd to suppose that he could make any *atonement* for sin, by his life or death either. If he was a *mere man*, Mr. Elwall is certainly right in affirming, * "that he never did any thing but what was his duty to do, and that he therefore could not merit any thing for others." If he was only a *man*, his incarnation itself could not be *voluntary*, and how therefore cou'd there be any thing of *merit* either in that or any other part of his supposed *humiliation*? Merit! no, so far from it that it was *possible* (I tremble to speak it) he might have himself sinned and perished *everlastingly*. And this, as a worthy clergyman assured me, one who called himself a *christian* asserted was possible. The *triumph* this surely, not of truth, but tremendous error! If however it shall appear that Christ hath *actually* made atonement for sin by his death, it will be, I think, no inconsiderable collateral proof of his true and proper Deity; for unless the dignity of his original nature be considered, what merit, what worth, what efficacy can there be supposed.

F 2

posed.

* *Triumph of Truth*, page 11.

posed to be in his *vicarious* sufferings, to display the enormous *evil of sin*, the awfulness of the *divine justice*, and the infinity of the *divine love*.

Almost all professing Christians, in every age, how much soever they may have disagreed upon other points, have united in acknowledging the doctrine of the *atonement* to be the grand *distinguishing* doctrine of the gospel. And notwithstanding the apparent ease with which the author of the Appeal in a page or two seems to set it aside, you will find it my friends, I am persuaded, if you search the scriptures, to be a truth which shines there as a star of the first magnitude, or rather as the *sun* at mid-day.

It cannot be expected that, in this brief address, I should set before you at large the evidence we have of this capital truth. Nor will it be thought necessary, if I am enabled to give you such a view of the doctrine, as may tend to establish your minds in the cordial belief of it, and enable you to derive that comfort hope and spiritual strength from it, which it is so eminently calculated to administer.

The author of the Appeal allows we read in scripture that Christ died as a *sacrifice* for our sins, but then he maintains it was not a *real* but *figurative* sacrifice, in like manner as when Christians are exhorted to present their bodies as living *sacrifices* unto God. That the death of Christ was in no other sense a *sacrifice* than as "the death of an illustrious martyr, who died in the glorious cause of truth and virtue." But let us see how this agrees with

with the scripture account of the sufferings and death of Christ.

If we look into the *Old Testament*, we there find the sufferings of Christ spoken of in the following manner. *Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him and by his stripes we are healed. It pleased the Lord to bruise him, HE hath put him to grief. He was numbered with the transgressors, and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. Messiah shall be cut off, but NOT for himself. The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.⁺ And is this, can it be thought, the description of the sufferings only of a martyr? Did it please the Lord to bruise an innocent person? Did he put him to grief? How can we explain such language as this, but by acknowledging that on the Messiah were laid, as the prophet assures us, the iniquities of us all?

F 3 In

* Isaiah liii. 4. &c. Dan. ix. 26.

⁺ In the *Triumph of Truth*, we are told (page 22.) that, "if any of the Jews had had the least notion of the necessity of any atonement for the sins of mankind, they could not but have expected a suffering Messiah; and yet it is plain that the very best of them had no such idea." And it might have been added, they had in general no idea of a spiritual Messiah, any more than a suffering one; they expected a great temporal prince to lead them forth to victory and triumph. But must not that mind be strangely warped by prejudice, that can suppose this to prove any thing more, than that the ancient Jews greatly erred, not knowing the scriptures? And notwithstanding the fine things said of the modern Jews, those faithful servants of God as Mr. Elwall styles them, [p. 15, 16.] may it not be justly feared, they too much resemble their ancestors in ignorance and unbelief?

In the New Testament we have the history of Christ's sufferings which it will be proper to survey in order to see how far, from this account of them, they appear to have been the sufferings only of a martyr.

And when the hour was come in which, as our Lord himself expresses it, (Luke xxii. 37.) the things concerning Him were to have an end or be accomplished, how deep and awful were the sufferings he endured! *My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death,* is the language he uses when his agony began. And then falling prostrate upon the ground, he breathes forth these pathetic words: *Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me, nevertheless, not as I will but as thou wilt;* *Father, save me from this hour, but, for this cause came I to this hour;* *O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, thy will be done!* And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. At length he is crucified. And at his crucifixion, from the sixth to the ninth hour there was an awful preternatural darkness over all the land. In the midst of this tremendous scene, the suffering Savior cries out, in language quite startling and astonishing,—*Eli, Eli, lama sabac-thani?* *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* With a loud voice he once more cries out, *It is FINISHED!* Then bows his sacred head and dies. And behold! in that awful moment, the veil of the temple is rent in twain from the top to the bottom, the earth quakes, the rocks are rent asunder, the graves are opened, and the bodies of

many

many sleeping saints arise ! And is this the history of the death only of a *martyr* ? Were the agonies we have been surveying, and the tremendous death we have just beheld, the agonies and death of a *martyr only* ? Was the sun darkened, all nature convulsed, the graves opened, and the dead raised, only to aggrandise a *martyr's* death ? It cannot be ! How much more natural is the exclamation of the Roman centurion who attended upon the dreadful occasion,—*truly this was the son of God!*

If Christ suffered not as a sacrifice or *propitiation* for sin, in the strict and proper sense of the words, whence proceeded his dreadful agony in the garden, and his awful complaint upon the cross ? He was in himself holy harmless and undefiled, had no sin, and could not therefore, abstractedly, dread the divine displeasure. And can it then be supposed the *prospect* only of his sufferings, had his sufferings been no more than the common sufferings of a *martyr*, would have thrown him into such an agony as to cause him to sweat great drops of blood to the ground ? What ever may be said of the keen sensations of the Redeemer, and the affecting view he had of the ingratitude and guilt of his countrymen the Jews, who were so base as to become his murderers ; yet still, unless the sufferings of Christ are allowed to have been *preter-natural*, we sink his character beneath that of many of his followers, who have met death in its most terrific forms and under every aggravating circumstance of a natural kind, with unshaken fortitude. And what tolerable account can we give of God's withdrawing from his son in the depth of his sufferings, and thereby

thereby extorting from him that affecting complaint, expressive of the deepest anguish humanity could possibly endure, *why hast thou forsaken me?* Or how could Christ have spoken of his sufferings, with any truth or propriety, as the cup which his Father gave him to drink; if we do not allow that his sufferings were preter-natural and vicarious, the sufferings of the just for the unjust? And is not this the uniform language of scripture concerning the sufferings of Christ? If it be not, surely we must despair of understanding scripture upon any point whatever. If the sufferings of Christ were not vicarious and propitiatory, what meaning can there be in such passages as these?—

Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world! but I lay down my life for the sheep. The son of man came, to give his life a RANSOM for many. Who was made sin for us, that is a sin-offering. Who bare our sins in his own body upon the tree. Who suffered the just FOR the unjust. Was once offered to bear the sins of many. By one offering hath for ever remitted all the sins of the world. W^m S^r Burton perfected

* John i. 29. X. 15. Mat. xxv. 28. 1 Cor. v. 21. 1 Pet. ii. 24. iii. 18. Heb. ix. 28. — X. 14. IX. 26. X. 6, 7, 10. Rom. viii. 32. IV. 25. V. 8. Rev. v. 6. VII. 14. v. 9. and for stow or w^m s^r burton

+ When the priest under the ceremonial law laid his hand on the head of the sacrifice, and confessed over it the iniquities of those for whom it was offered, the sacrifice is said to bear those iniquities; in consequence of which was a discharge from guilt: and this is called making atonement for sin. Now there is in the scripture above cited, and in numberless other passages in the New Testament, a plain allusion to this ceremony. And supposing this ceremony to have been typical of the atonement for sin by the death of Christ, there is a manifest propriety in the allusion. But if in this ceremony there was no reference to the vicarious sufferings and death of Christ, then the writers of the New Testament were greatly mistaken in alluding to a custom to illustrate the subject

perfected them that are sanctified. Who appeared—to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. In burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hadst no pleasure; then said I, lo I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God—by the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. God spared not his own son, but freely delivered him up FOR us all. He was delivered FOR our offences, and raised again FOR our justification. God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died FOR us. IN THE MIDST OF THE THRONE stood a LAMB as it had been slain. These are they which came out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Thou art worthy—for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood. * Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things—but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the remission of sins, according to the riches of his grace. Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare I say at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. Without shedding of blood there is no remission. The blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanseth us.

they treat of, which had no reference to it at all.—But is it reasonable or, I had almost said, *possible* to suppose the apostles did not understand the design of the ceremonial law better than the author of the Appeal, and the rest of our modern Socinians?

* 1 Pet. i. 19. Eph. i. 7. Rom. iii. 25, 26. Heb. ix. 22.
1 John i. 7. Heb. ix. 13, 14. Rom. x. 4.

us from all sin. If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how MUCH MORE shall the blood of Christ who through the eternal Spirit offered himself up without spot to God, purge your consciences from dead works, to serve the living God? Christ is the END OF THE LAW for righteousness to every one that believeth.—But I had need transcribe almost all the New Testament, were I to enumerate all those passages of scripture, which more immediately or remotely speak of the sufferings of Christ as vicarious and propitiatory. It is in my opinion impossible for any language to express more clearly and fully than the language of scripture hath already, the necessity and importance of the sufferings of Christ, and that his death was a real and proper sacrifice for sin, and is available in the sight of God as the great meritorious procuring cause of our compleat redemption. When we want to communicate our ideas of these things, where can we find words so full, striking, and proper for the purpose, as in the New Testament?

How amazing then must it be to the serious humble Christian, to be told that “it is only from the literal interpretation of a few figurative expressions in the scriptures that this doctrine of atonement, as well as that of *transubstantiation*, has been derived?”*

— But at this rate, what shall we have left that is not figurative, or how shall we be able to distinguish that which is figurative from that which is not so? Was the agony of Christ in the garden, when

* Triumph of Truth, page 23.

he sweat great drops of blood, a *real*, or was it only a *figurative* agony? Was his death *real*, or was it only *figurative*? Did he die for *sin* *really*, or only *figuratively*? Was he *really* wounded for our sins and bruised for our iniquities, or only *figuratively*? Did he *really* by one offering for ever perfect them that are sanctified, or did he do it *only figuratively*? Did he *really* obtain eternal redemption for sinners, or did he only obtain it *figuratively*? Was this *eternal redemption* he obtained, a *real* or was it only a *figurative* redemption? What shall we make of the scriptures, or how shall we be able to learn any thing from them with certainty, if we are to be thus perplexed about the meaning of some of the plainest and most positive assertions contained in them?

If the death of Christ was only a *figurative sacrifice*, how comes it to pass that his death is spoken of in a manner so *entirely different* from the death of any other person, and in such language as cannot, without the most flagrant impiety, be applied to any person but himself. Paul was a martyr in the cause of truth and virtue as well as his divine master. But did Paul bear *our sins* in his own body on the tree? Was Paul wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities? Did Paul obtain *eternal redemption* for us? We are exhorted, it is allowed, to yield up our bodies living sacrifices, to offer the sacrifices of praise continually, and even to lay down our lives for the brethren.* But is this suffering the just for the unjust, being delivered for the offences of sinners,

* Appeal, page 19.

sinners, and raised for their justification, or shedding our blood for the remission of sins?

Besides if the death of Christ was only a figurative sacrifice, what shall we make of the sacrifices under the law? Surely they could be no more than figurative sacrifices neither. The sacrifice of Christ superseded all the legal sacrifices, which ceased when Christ had offered up himself without spot to God. Indeed the principal design of the sacrifices appointed under the law, seems to have been to typify or shadow out the great sacrifice that was to be offered up once for all under the dispensation of the gospel. This point is proved to us at large in the epistle to the Hebrews. The legal sacrifices could not therefore be superior to the sacrifice of Christ. No: the reasoning of scripture is, that if the blood of bulls and goats purified the flesh, MUCH MORE shall the blood of Christ purge the conscience. But if the sacrifice of Christ was only a figurative sacrifice, how could the conscience be purged by it much more or any more than by the legal sacrifices? Or if the sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifices under the law were both figurative, we have then figures of a figure, shadows of a shadow, unsupported by any substance, any proper reality.

In like manner, if the sacrifice of Christ be only a figurative sacrifice, what shall we make of the ordinance of the Lord's supper? * Take eat, says Christ, when he took the bread, this is my body, that is, as every Protestant allows and common sense obliges us to suppose, an emblem, figure or memorial.

* Matt. xxvi. 26, 27, 28. 1 Cor. xi. 28.

morial of my body, which is in design and purpose, and will soon actually be broken for you. And taking the cup he says, drink ye all of it, for this is my blood of the New Testament, that is, a figure or emblem of it, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. The bread and the wine in this ordinance are evident figures of the body and blood of Christ, and of the breaking of the one and the pouring out of the other, for the remission of sins. But if the body of Christ was broken for us only figuratively, and his blood shed for the remission of sins only figuratively; we have in this ordinance a figurative commemoration of a figurative sacrifice, without any original, any reality.—And indeed if the death of Christ were only the common death of a martyr, why should not the death of Stephen and other martyrs be commemorated in like manner? Christ foreknew and predicted the martyrdom of some of his disciples, but he has left no directions about the commemoration of their death. And the reason is evident. Was Paul crucified for us? Have we redemption, have we the forgiveness of sins, through the blood of Paul, or Peter, or John, or any other of the apostles or Christian martyrs? Were they slain for us? Is it in their blood our robes are to be washed and made white? “The ordinance of the eucharist seems indeed to have so plain a reference to the atonement or satisfaction of Christ, and to do so solemn an honor to that fundamental doctrine of the gospel, that I cannot but believe, that while this sacred institution continues in the church (as it will undoubtedly do to the end of the world) it will be

“ impossible to root that doctrine out of the minds
 “ of plain humble Christians, by all the little arti-
 “ fices of such forced and unnatural criticisms, as
 “ those are by which it has been attacked. Unpre-
 “ judiced and honest simplicity will always see the
 “ analogy this ordinance has to eating the flesh of
 “ the son of God, and drinking his blood, and will
 “ be taught by it to feed on him, as the Lamb that
 “ was slain by the gracious appointment of God to
 “ take away the sin of the world. The enemies of
 “ this heart-reviving truth might as well hope to
 “ pierce through a coat of mail with a *Arrow*, as to
 “ reach such a truth, defended by such an ordinance
 “ as this, by any of their trifling sophistries.”*

The refinements of our *rational divines*, in divi-
 nity, seem much to resemble the refinements of some
 of our late *metaphysicians*, in philosophy. The lat-
 ter reasoned themselves out of the belief of a *real*
materiol world, and converted every thing into
 phantasm; the former have reasoned themselves out
 of the belief of a *real Savior*, converting every thing
 in the bible that speaks of our redemption by Christ
 into metaphor and figure. The next point is to
 persuade us the scriptures only speak of a *figurative*
metaphorical salvation, and this *rational scheme* will be
 consummated.

But it is pretended that the doctrine of the atone-
 ment reflects greatly on the *mercy* of God, and
 opens a door to *licentiousness*. How injurious is this
 representation! What does it reflect on the *mercy*
 of

* Doddr. Exp. Vol. II. p. 458. Note [f] on Luke xxii. 20.

of God that he *so loved* the world, as not to spare but freely deliver up his own Son to death, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish but have everlasting life? Can any inference be more perverse? How widely different is the reasoning of the apostle John upon this point! His language is, † *Hereby perceive we the LOVE of God, because he, that is Christ, laid down his life for us.* And herein is LOVE, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. So far is the doctrine of the atonement from eclipsing the love of God, that LOVE seems to be the grand leading attribute it displays. The Father's gift of his Son to die as a sacrifice for our sins, was the greatest gift he could possibly bestow upon us. It is called an unspeakable gift; and we are taught to argue from the bestowment of this gift to the hope of any other be it ever so great. He that gave his Son to die for us, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things! Yet this very gift itself, it is pretended, implies a reflection upon the love and mercy of the giver. What can be more astonishing? Surely, whatever objections may be urged against the doctrine of the atonement, its implying a reflection on the mercy and love of God cannot, with any propriety, be deemed one. For the greater we suppose the sufferings of Christ to have been, the greater it supposes the love of God to be, in delivering him up to such sufferings for our redemption.

It is still said why should God rigidly insist upon a satisfaction for sin, and not remit the punishment

due to the sinner till he had received § “the uttermost farthing?” Now suppose we could not tell *why*, what then? Is it therefore impossible that it should be so, or that there should be any sufficient reason for it, because we cannot tell what that reason is? What impious arrogance must it be to affirm this! And yet, I fear too often the only reason for rejecting a doctrine is, not because it is not sufficiently *revealed* in the word of God, but because *we think* it absurd. But in the present case we are far from being in the dark as to the reasons of the divine conduct. The author of the Appeal indeed tells us, that if we were to imitate God herein “we should be *implacable* and *unmerciful*.” But the fallacy of this objection we have already seen. And it is indeed strange that *no other reason* can be thought of why the great governor of the world should manifest his displeasure against sin, at the same time that he shews mercy to the sinner, but *implacability* and *unmercifulness*. Some may have perhaps been *unguarded* in the expressions they have used concerning the *wrath* of God, and his being *placated* or *appeased* by the death of his Son, but this is no objection to the grand doctrine of the atonement, for it is certain no one ever meant to ascribe to God the passions of an angry man. We know nevertheless, that ever since sin entered into the world, the righteous and moral governor of the universe hath *seen fit* to manifest in the most awful manner, what we know not how to call otherwise than his *abhorrence* of sin, and his *displeasure* with sinners

sinners upon the account of it. Witness the alteration in the state of things occasioned by the fall, the destruction of the old world by the deluge, and of Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities of the plain by fire. Witness, I may say, the constant tenor of the divine dispensations in every age of the world, from the beginning till now. And we further know that *it became him* by whom are all things, and for whom are all things, *in bringing many sons to glory*, (which his sovereign love engaged him to do,) to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.* That is, it would not have become the holy God to have saved sinners and brought any of them to glory, but in and through the sufferings of Christ; who was qualified by his sufferings for the great and important character of a Savior, or the captain of our salvation. It became the supreme ruler † to be just and

G 3 faithful

* Heb. ii. 10.

† “I know hardly any thing of so much importance to give us just sentiments of the proceedings of God with his creatures as that we should conceive of him as a *moral Ruler* or the *supreme Magistrate* of the world. And it is owing to their not considering him in this character that sinners indulge such mistaken dangerous presumptions concerning him. They choose to conceive of him under some *fond and tender name*, as a Being of infinite grace, the *indulgent Father* of his creatures, &c. All this is true; but it is equally true that he is their *moral Ruler* as well as their *Father*. His creatures are his *subjects* as well as his *children*; and he must act the wise and righteous *Magistrate* as well as the tender *Father* towards them. His goodness is that of a *Ruler*, and not of a *private person*; and his pardoning of sin and receiving offenders into favor are not *private kindnesses* but acts of *government*, and therefore they must be conducted with the utmost wisdom; for a wrong step in his infinite administration, which affects such innumerable multitudes of subjects, would be an infinite evil, and might admit of no reparation.”

Davies's Serm. Vol. 2. Serm. 18th.

faithful as well as merciful in forgiving sin and saving sinners. It became him to be a just God as well as a Savior. It became him to magnify the law and make it honorable, as much as to deliver penitent sinners from the curse of it. It became him to make Christ the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth, as much surely as to deliver the believer from its awful threatenings. In a word it became him not to exalt one attribute on the ruins of another, but to display, as he does in all his other works, each of his bright and glorious perfections in delightful harmony with one another.‡ And accordingly we find throughout the New Testament, the sufferings of Christ are so far from being represented as in any respect casual, or like the accidental sufferings of a martyr, that they are said to have been in consequence of the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, and necessary to the accomplishment of the great schemes of divine providence and grace. * As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so, says the Savior himself, MUST the Son of man be lifted up. And after his resurrection from the dead, he takes great pains to shew his disciples from the scriptures of the Old Testament, that

‡ “ Not, thus, our infidels th’ Eternal draw,
A God all o’er, consummate, absolute,
Full-orb’d, in his whole round of rays complete :
They set at odds heaven’s jarring attributes ;
And, with one excellence another wound ;
Maim heaven’s perfection, break its equal beams ;
Bid mercy triumph over—God himself ;
Undeify’d by their opprobrious praise :
A God all mercy, is a God unjust.” YOUNG.

* John iii. 14.

it behoved or was necessary for him to suffer, and that remission of sins should be preached in his name, among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.* And whatever may be thought of this astonishing scheme of salvation by ignorant men, the holy angels contemplate it with ineffable delight, and are desiring more and more to look into it.

Indeed in what mirror have we such a bright display of the glorious perfections of Deity, as in the atoning death of Christ? Here we have his power, his wisdom, his justice, his holiness, and his love, all shining forth with united radiance, and mutually heightening the lustre of each other. Who can behold the fulgurance of glory which is here displayed, without being transformed into the image of it? Will any one presume to say it was not *as becoming* the divine character for the great God to display his justice, and his holiness, or the greatest possible hatred of sin as to display his love in the salvation of sinners? That there were not *as great and important ends* to be answered in the moral government of the universe, by the display of one perfection as of another? Or that it would have been *more worthy* of God to have displayed his grace without any regard to his holiness?—Nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Christ crucified was indeed heretofore a stumbling block to the Jews, and foolishness to the Greeks; but nevertheless it was then, and it is still, the *wisdom* of God, and the *power* of God to *every one that believeth*. Where then is the wise? where is the scribe? where

is

* Luke xxiv. 46, 47.

*the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish
the wisdom of this world?**

The pretence that the doctrine of the *atonement* leads to *licentiousness*, is one of the most groundless objections that can be thought of. Do we make void the law by faith in Christ as the great propitiation for sin, or as the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth? Nay but we establish the law. Can there be any method of displaying the infinite hatred of God against sin more fully or strikingly, than by the death of Christ as a vicarious sacrifice for sin? What can so strongly impress the mind of a sinner with a sense of the *odiousness of sin*, and establish his regards to *holiness*, as faith in Christ? Who can have light thoughts of sin or be indifferent to the law of God as a rule of life, that believes Christ died for his sins according to the scriptures? The doctrine of the *atonement* as well as every other doctrine may undoubtedly be abused; but to pretend that it is in itself a *licentious doctrine*, or that it leads to an indifference about personal holiness, can only evidence the perverseness of the human mind, and the unaccountableness of many of its operations. This doctrine relieves the sinner from the horrors of despair; and thereby prevents him from abandoning himself to the service of sin under the pretence of its being in vain to hope for salvation. But yet at the same time it opens wide the door of salvation, it sets before the sinner, in a manner not to be expressed, the awful nature of sin: and thereby appears eminently calculated to secure his

regards

* 1 Cor. i. 20.

regards to holiness: And finally, it lays the penitent under such *infinite obligations* to divine love which saves him so freely and yet so awfully, that it seems scarcely possible for him to refrain crying out,—what shall I render to the Lord for his astonishing goodness to me, and how shall I ever more dare to sin against *that God* who hath so loved me, as to *send his Son to die* for me ! “ Is it possible for “ the contemplation of such goodness to weaken “ the motives or relax the springs of obedience ? “ As soon may *lenient balms* kill, and rankest poi-“ sons cure. Is such a belief calculated to discour-“ age duty, and patronize licentiousness ? Just as “ much, as *vernal showers* are fitted to cleave the “ earth with chinks, or summer suns to glaze the “ waters with ice.”

“ Talk they of morals ? Oh thou bleeding love !
Thou maker of new morals to mankind !
The grand morality is love of thee ! ” YOUNG.

“ Only let a *sense* of thy love be always warm, “ always operative on our minds. This shall be “ instead of a thousand *arguments* to engage, instead “ of ten thousand *motives* to quicken our obedience. “ Other motives may produce some external ser-“ vices, or hypocritical performances. Terrors “ may extort the drudgery of the hand. Bribes “ may purchase the adulation of the tongue. But “ this conciliates the will ; this proselytes the affec-“ tions ; this captivates the very soul ; and makes “ all

" all its powers like the chariots of Aminadab, ready,
" expedite, and active in duty."*

Without holiness, inward personal holiness of heart and life, we readily acknowledge according to the scriptures, no man shall see the Lord. But all we plead for is, that the scriptures do also clearly inform us, that in order to our becoming thus holy, it is necessary we be created anew in Christ Jesus. We do not pretend that sinners will be saved without being sanctified as well as justified, but only insist upon it that they are both sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. In short, that it is Christ who is the grand meritorious procuring cause of every spiritual blessing, or who is made of God unto them that believe, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.—And whether the patrons of this great truth ever have been, or are now, less holy and exemplary in their lives and conversations than the opposers of it, we may safely leave even the most prejudiced to determine.

Upon the whole, it is clearly evident that the glorious doctrine of the atonement, at once exalts all the divine perfections, effectually relieves the guilty conscience of the distressed sinner, destroys the power of sin, and promotes the interests of holiness. God forbid then that we should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is able to crucify the world with all its reproaches unto us, and us unto the world !

Thus

* HERVEY,

Thus have I freely addressed you, brethren, on the several heads I first proposed, and would now leave you freely to judge for yourselves of what I have laid before you. And may the God of truth lead you into all truth, and give you a spiritual understanding in all things!

I should not have solicited your attention in the manner I have, had I not been deeply convinced in my own mind, that the principles I have pleaded for are closely connected with genuine humility and holiness. And I can call God to witness, that it is with *a sincere and earnest desire* to revive the ancient spirit and practice of evangelical piety and obedience, that I have endeavored to guard you against those principles, which to me appear, wherever they have prevailed, to have been, in too great a measure, the *bane of vital religion*.

But remember the *most scriptural belief* without a *correspondent life* will not constitute you Christians. By * our fruits we are to be known to others ; and hereby we do ourselves know that we know Christ, know him spiritually and savingly, if we keep his commandments.† Let us then make it our daily care, in a humble dependence upon the promised aids of the good Spirit, to shew forth our works with the meekness of evangelical wisdom. Let our light so shine before men, that others beholding our amiable conversation, may take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus, and be led to glorify our Father who is in heaven.

And

* Matt. vii. 16.

† 1 John ii. 3.

And finally, let us hold the truth *in love*, affectionately pray for those who appear to be strangers to it, and *never render railing for railing*, but *contrariwise blessing*. To conclude—

Look down, O God of love! upon a declining church, and, *in principle and practice*, revive us yet again, that we may rejoice in Thee!

T H E E N D.

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